



*State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.2413 | FAX (517) 373.5144
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/allen/*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2003

Contact: Jamie Callahan
(517) 373-2413

Allen's legislation lifting ban on scholarships for religious studies passed by Education Committee

Lansing – A package of bills making college theology, divinity and religious education majors eligible for scholarships or grant money from the state of Michigan passed unopposed in the Senate Committee on Education, Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City) announced today.

Allen introduced the seven-bill, bi-partisan sponsored package earlier this year to end the practice of discrimination against certain types of academic study.

“Michigan college students should not be denied access to certain scholarships based on their choice of study,” Allen said.

Teresa Becker, one of Allen's constituents, is a student who does not have equal access to the more than \$242 million awarded yearly to students in grants and scholarships because she chose to study theology.

Becker filed a lawsuit against the state earlier this year when they rescinded her scholarship based on her major of study. Federal District Judge George Caram Steeh ruled the state is prohibited from enforcing the statute preventing her from receiving scholarship money.

Allen's legislation would affect five main programs: The Michigan Merit Scholarship, the Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant, the Michigan Competitive Scholarship, the Part-time Independent Student Grant, and the state's Tuition Grant programs.

Allen said changing the law also would help the state avoid future potential law suits, as the current language can be deemed a violation of Article I, Sec. 4 of the State Constitution.

“This is not a church-state issue, it is an issue of educational freedom,” Allen said.
“We need to level the playing field for all of Michigan's college students.”